

MENTAL HEALTH UPDATE

November 18, 2008

Pieces Of History In Vermont Mental Health

The “Pieces of History” series in the Mental Health Update describes key events and significant policy milestones in the evolving Mental Health Systems of Care, thus, connecting our past to the present.

1865 The HowardCenter’s Child, Youth, and Family Services Division has a long history of serving Vermont’s children. One hundred and forty-three years ago, an association was formed in Burlington to provide a home for “neglected and destitute children.” The home, known as the Home for Destitute Children, soon opened its doors on Main Street and was incorporated by the Vermont State Legislature on November 1, 1865.

As the population increased and the program slowly became more focused on treatment, the name was changed to The Children’s Home, and its location was moved to Shelburne Road where Price Chopper now sits. During the 1950s, mental health treatment intensified with an increased ratio of professional staff, including teachers. In early 1960, a new building was opened on the organization’s property on Pine Street. The building was designed as a residential treatment center with space for 8 girls and 16 boys on three wings, with 2 classrooms and quarters for live-in child care staff. That same year, the home was renamed The Josephine Baird Center for Children and Families in honor of the mother of a long-time benefactor of the Home.

In the early to mid-1990s, the number of children served continued to grow and additional community-based programs were created, including school programs. In 1990, three residential treatment homes were built on the property and plans were made to turn the on-site education program into an independent school for students in special education with an emotional disability. The program also operated a short-term emergency bed for children experiencing a mental health crisis. In a 1994 response to changes in health care financing and a need to provide a more systematic response to children and families in Chittenden County, the Baird Center merged with Howard Mental Health Services and Champlain Drug and Alcohol Services. In 2007, the consolidated organization changed its name to HowardCenter.

Regardless of its name or location, the needs of Vermont’s children have been the driving force behind this dynamic and long-lived organization.

NAMI – VT Annual Meeting

The National Alliance for The Mentally Ill (NAMI)-Vermont held its 25th Annual meeting on Saturday November 8th at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier. A large spirited group of family members attended the meeting along with Legislators and other government officials, such as Mental Health Commissioner Michael Hartman and AHS Deputy Secretary Patrick Flood, to celebrate the 25 years of NAMI-VT. Much of the morning was focused on the issue of mental illness in the criminal justice system. Renowned journalist and NAMI member Pete Early, author of the book *Crazy: A Father's Search Through America's Mental Health Madness*, gave an interesting but disturbing investigative report of his national research on mental illness in the criminal justice system. This was followed by a Vermont Legislative panel that included Senator Richard Sears and Representatives Michael Fisher, Mitzi Johnson and Jason Lorber, (NAMI-VT's Legislator of the Year) discussing Vermont's work in this area.

The celebratory luncheon included Michael Fitzpatrick, Executive Director of the national NAMI and Ann Moore, outgoing President of NAMI-VT, who chronicled the twenty five years of the organization. Charlie Biss, Children's Services Director with the Vermont Department of Mental Health, was recognized for his significant contribution to helping families organize NAMI-VT. The founding of NAMI-VT emerged from a 20-week psychoeducational course that Charlie Biss organized and facilitated for families of persons with mental illness.

ADULT MENTAL HEALTH

CSAC Recognized for its Emergency Response

The Department of Mental Health wishes to recognize the significant efforts of the Counseling Services of Addison County and its staff following a motor vehicle accident early this month involving several persons served by the Designated Agency and an agency staff member. The prompt response of the CRT and the Emergency Services Program staff members were key in managing the multiple needs of the effected individuals, contacts with family and other support systems, and the essential information flow that needed to occur across multiple community and health care service providers. In addition, we wish to recognize the important support provided by Vermont Psychiatric Survivors to the staff and members of Evergreen House that day. During such a period of crisis, the teamwork, professionalism, and compassion for those involved was clearly evidenced in their interventions and outreach on that day and in the days that have followed.

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH

6th Annual Vermont Collaboration Conference on Children, Youth and Families

The 6th Annual Vermont Collaboration Conference on Children, Youth and Families was held on Friday, October 17 at Killington. This annual conference was sponsored by the Vermont Agency of Human Services and the University of Vermont/Vermont Dept. of Education BEST Project (Building Effective Strategies for Teaching). It was attended by advocates, human services workers, parents and family members, educators, state government employees and "anyone who want(ed) an opportunity to engage in shared learning and support with like-minded Vermonters interested in strengthening families

and communities”. Keynote speaker Jane Middleton-Moz has worked with numerous communities around the country as a consultant and trainer in the area of developing responses to community-wide trauma and grief. She has become well known nationally and internationally through her writings and television appearances.

Her moving keynote address, titled *The Hurt of One is the Hurt of All, The Honor of One is the Honor of All, Community Intervention with Indigenous Populations*, presented a model of facilitating the healing and empowerment of individuals by working with the entire community and its culture. She focused on her extensive work with Native American and First Nation communities in which decades of oppression and racism have resulted in a loss of cultural identity, poverty and multi-generational trauma. Over time, this trauma has been manifested pervasively throughout these cultures in the form of depression, addictions, domestic violence, sexual abuse, suicide and homicide. She and her teams work with all community members, including children and youth, as well as the elders who have the knowledge and experience of the inherent cultural wisdom upon which to base strategies for healing and regaining strength and resilience. Ms. Middleton-Moz is the Director of the Middleton-Moz Institute, a division of The Institute of Professional Practice, Inc (www.ippi.org).

Vermont ARC Project for Children’s Mental Health Programs

The Vermont ARC (Attachment, Self-Regulation & Competencies) Project got off to a terrific start in September and early October. The Program will be a year-long training & consultation project on the ARC framework of trauma treatment with children & families. The ARC model, developed by Margaret Blaustein, Ph.D. and Kristine Kinniburgh, LICSW of The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute in Massachusetts, is recognized by the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) as a promising practice for the treatment of complex psychological trauma in children. This model was selected for use in Vermont because it recognizes the multiple needs of children and families who have experienced complex trauma. The model:

- values multi-systemic collaboration in the treatment approach
- is individualized to the child’s and family’s needs
- involves family at all levels of participation
- builds on the strengths of the child, family and community.

The 45 participating clinicians and supervisors from all 11 DA/SSA Children’s Mental Health programs attended an all-day training in September with Dr. Margaret Blaustein for an overview of ARC concepts and implementation strategies. This group also had their first 90-minute phone consultation in early October with Dr. Blaustein to further its understanding of the concepts of the framework, application in clinical work and implementation within agency programs. The Project will continue with monthly phone consultations and two in-person half-day consultations through September 2009. The overall goal for the Project is that implementation of the ARC framework will increase the community mental health providers’ clinical skills to assess, treat, and achieve positive outcomes for children who have experienced trauma and their families.

FUTURES PROJECT

Consultation Group To Meet November 20

The Futures Team will meet with the Consultation Group Thursday, November 20, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. in Conference Room 3B at 108 Cherry Street in Burlington. The agenda for this meeting will include a discussion of consumer and family member experience using crisis programs. Specific questions to be addressed include:

- When you're in crisis, what helps, what hurts?
- What is important for a new program to know about you?
- How can peers be most involved?
- What is it like going from the hospital to returning home?
- What do you find most impactful from the consumer perspective?

For those who are unable to attend in person the dial-in number is 1-866-628-8620. The Pin number is 187566. People who experience difficulties connecting to the conference line should call 802-652-2003.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL

VSH Nursing Journal Club Invited to Work with the Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association to Identify Evidence-based Practices

The October/November edition of the *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association* (APNA) included a Letter to the Editor from Leah Matteson, VSH Education and Training Coordinator, on behalf of the VSH Nursing Journal Club. The Journal Club is composed of nurses who meet to review and discuss articles from professional journals as a means of supporting the evolution of their professional practice. The latest discussions had involved articles from the APNA journal regarding Evidence-Based Practice.

In her letter, Ms. Matteson asked the following question about evidence-based practice: "What is the best way to manage an aggressive/violent patient, who could cause serious harm to staff, while maintaining a therapeutic relationship?" She also asked about developing some sort of online discussion forum for this so that input could come from around the country.

The response from the APNA was to invite the VSH Nursing Journal Club to work with the editorial board to develop and examine the evidence on this issue and to help with the publication of the results in a future issue. The APNA Executive Director will also investigate technologies to make a forum available to nurses to discuss this and other issues of professional interest.

The nursing staff at VSH are honored to join the APNA to work toward applying evidence based practice to psychiatric nursing.

VERMONT STATE HOSPITAL CENSUS

The Vermont State Hospital Census was 46 as of midnight Tuesday. The average census for the past 45 days was 46.3

